

THE RIDDLE
OF THE WORLD

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TO
MY DAUGHTER

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PREFACE

THIS book is not meant to be a treatise on Theism. I am well aware how much more ought to be said on that great theme than appears in these pages. Nor is it written primarily for theologians and scholars, but for what in Russia used to be called the *intelligentsia*, that large body of educated men and women in all social classes who are interested in things of the spirit. While this has been my primary aim, I have endeavoured at the same time, to the best of my ability, to keep abreast of the present movements of thought as these are expressed in the more technical volumes of the specialists. I have the faith that if theologians take trouble enough they can make their theme intelligible to a much wider public than at present. I would even entertain the hope that it may be possible to convey to that public something of the absorbing interest and grandeur which every true theologian must feel to be inherent in his theme, however much it may, in the course of ages, have been encrusted with formulas and technicalities that do not belong to its essential nature. I know, however, how far short in this respect this volume comes. I have striven mainly after intelligibility, even at the cost of diffuseness and repetition and other faults to which it would be unwise to call the reader's attention in a preface. On the other hand I fear I may sometimes have erred on the side of technicality.

As regards acknowledgments which fall naturally to be made in a preface, I am debtor to too many people to find room for explicit acknowledgment of them all. My creditors will recognise their own thoughts, and perhaps even their own words in these pages. But there are certain specific acknowledgments which ought to be made. First of all I wish to thank the Baird Trustees, not only for the honour which they have done me in inviting me to be one of the lecturers under a Trust which has deserved so well of Scottish religion, but for the consideration which they have shown me in granting me an extended interval for the completion of the lectures in the form of a book. Secondly, I should like to thank the Trustees of the Deems Lectureship in the United States for permitting me to use the material of the lectures given under their auspices in New York University and Lafayette College in 1923. These lectures have been greatly changed by the development of my own thought through the intervening years, but formed the basis of the later argument, and I appreciate the courtesy which has authorised me to use them in this way. I would also thank the Rev. Hugh Martin, of the Student Christian Movement, for the generous help he has given me in the revision of the proofs, and Miss Alice Copeland for her skill and patience shown in transcription. I am indebted also to Professor Birch Hoyle for the excellent index which he has prepared. Finally, the book owes very much, both in form and in substance, to my daughter and secretary, who has given invaluable help in its production.

D. S. C.

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